DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 152 840 TM 007 055

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TITLE An Assessment of the Validity of the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discriminatory Attitudes (Social); Early Childhood Education; Ethnocentrism; *Interpersonal Relationship; Lower Class; Peer Relationship; *Preschool Tests; *Racial Attitudes; Racial Differences; Racism; Sex Differences; Social Attitudes; *Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS *Comfortable Interpersonal Distance Scale; *Preschool Racial Attitude Measure II

ABSTRACT

The Preschool Racial Attitude Measure (PRAM) and the Comfortable Interpersonal Distance Scale (CID) were concurrently administered in counterbalanced order to 60 black and white five and six-year olds to establish whether a relationship existed between assessed racial bias and the interpersonal distance ascribed to figures by race. No relationship was found to exist between these two instruments. Distancing was unrelated to bias score, and inconsistently related to race and sex of subject. These findings bring to bear serious questions of validity for both instruments. Plausible hypotheses are that the PRAM and CID are tapping different aspects of racial attitude, or that the paper and pencil measure may be too abstract for preschool populations. (Author/CTM)

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An Assessment of the Validity of the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure

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ABSTRACT

The Preschool Racial Attitude Measure (PRAM) is being used throughout the literature to assess racial bias in preschool and early grade school populations. The data from these studies have far reaching implications for the study of racial attitude development and ramifications for procedures to modify such biases, and bring them to a neutral baseline levels of responding. Although widely used, the validity of the PRAM instrument has not, to date been established. Because of the major ramifications of these data, it is imperative that the psychometric soundness of the PRAM be assessed. Content, concurrent and predictive validity must be established if the data are to be generalized. This study marks the first attempt to establish concurrent and content validity for the PRAM.

The Comfortable Interpersonal Distance Scale (CID) is an instrument which has been established as being an adequate indicator of interpersonal distancing among preschool and grade school populations, and with which differential patterns as a function of race have found consistently.

The CID and PRAM were concurrently administered in counterbalanced order to 60 black and white five and six-year-olds to establish if a relationship existed between assessed racial bias and the interpersonal distance ascribed to figures by race. No relationship was found to exist between these two instruments. Distancing was unrelated to bias score, and inconsistently related to race and sex of subject. These findings bring to bear serious question of validity for both instruments. Plausible hypotheses are that the PRAM and CID are tapping different aspects of racial attitude or that the paper and pencil measure may be too abstract for preschool populations.

An Assessment of the Validity of the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure

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The Preschool Racial Attitude Measure (Williams & Roberson, 1967; Williams, Best, & Boswell, 1975; Williams, Best, Boswell, Mattson, & Graves, 1976) is currently being used throughout the literature to assess racial biases in young children. The data garnered by these assessments have major implications for conclusions about racial attutude development as well as exerting a shaping influence upon the hypotheses of future experiments assigned to modify these biases, and establish neutral baseline response patterns.

Since the PRAM is being widely used and its data have such impact, it is imperative that its psychometric soundness be assessed. To date, neither the content, construct nor predictive validity of the PRAM has been established. This study marks the first attempt to establish validation of the PRAM. It is imperative that researchers be certain this instrument is really tapping the construct "Racial Attitude". To this end, concurrent and content validation of the PRAM were tested by concurrent administration of the Comfortable Interpersonal Distance Scale (CID).

The CID is an instrument which has been established as being an adequate indicator of interpersonal distance for grade school as well as preschool populations (Lett, Clark & Altman, 1969; Guarde, 1969; Duke & Wilson, 1971). Recently Duke & Nowicki (1972) noted that differential distancing occurs by race of stimulus such that some race stimuli are distanced closer than opposite stimuli. The purpose of the present study is to establish what relationship exists between the PRAM--a measure of racial bias by the positive or negative evaluation ascribed to black and white stimulus figures--and the CID, with which the interpersonal distance ascribed to stimulus figures as a function of race and sex can be measured.

METHOD

Subjects were 60 lower class black and white five and six year olds from a public preschool program in a mid-sized Southern city. This center was chosen because the makeup of the student population as well as the teaching staff was racially balanced, and admission to this program had been based upon mean income, number in household, and occupation of head of household. A rare opportunity existed to test both black and white children from similar economic backgrounds in the same setting, thus eliminating the socioeconomic confound so often found in comparative research across racial lines.

Stimulus materials. The PRAM II consists of 24, 8" x 11" full color artist drawn picture pairs. Two individuals appear in each of the picture sets and are identical with respect to age, sex, apparel, and posture. They differ only by race. A story containing one of 24 positive or negative adjectives accompanies each picture. The child is asked to select the black or white figure he/she feels the story is about. Each story incorporates one of 21 positive or negative adjectives. Each negative adjective ascribed to a black figure or each positive adjective ascribed to a white figure is scored as one bias point with a maximum bias score of 24.

The Comfortable Interpersonal Distance Scale is a paper and pencil instrument administered individually to preschool populations, although an alternate form can be group administered with older children. Materials consist of an 8" x 11" sheet of paper with eight radii emanating from a central point, each radius being 80 millimeters in length, and eight Fischer-Price wooden people approximately two inches high. A mother, father, boy, and girl are the basic figures; four of the stimuli are flesh colored with blond hair and four identical stimuli are chocolate with black hair. Additionally, a stimulus representing the child is placed at the center point. The distance between the central point and any location on the radius indicated by the

subject is easily measured and reflects the assumption that interpersonal distance is a continuous variable (Duke & Nowicki, 1972). Responses are scored as the distance in millimeters between the mark on the radius and the central point on the CID sheet.

Procedure. Each measure is individually administered in counterbalanced order during a single testing session. The child is seated at a small table across from the experimenter. For the CID, the subject is presented the CID sheet and asked to pretend that he/she is in the middle a big room and that each of the boxes represented at the end of the radii are doors through which different people represented by the Fischer-Price stimuli enter and begin walking toward him/her. The child was to say stop when he/she would have felt uncomfortable if the figure came closer.

For the PRAM presentation, the child is told that the experimenter would like his/her help. For each story that is read, the child is to point to the stimulus figure he/she feels the story is about.

RESULTS

The distance scores for each of the eight CID stimuli were correlated with the PRAM II scores. Of interest was the relationship of high vs. neutral vs. low PRAM scores to the interpersonal distance ascribed to the experimental figures by race, sex, and age. Would the distancing patterns of those subjects with high (pro-white/anti-black) PRAM scores be different from those subjects with low PRAM scores (pro-black/anti-white)? No significant correlation were found (r = .01 through .09).

The difference in distance was computed for each opposite race stimulus pair such that the distance ascribed to the black figure was subtracted from the distance ascribed to the corresponding white figure. These figures were then correlated with the PRAM bias scores. For black subjects, the distancing of

the sister stimulus was significantly correlated with the PRAM score (r = .39; p .03). As can be seen in Table 1, no other significant correlations

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Insert Table 1 here

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were found. Overall the distancing of experimental stimuli by race bore no relationship to the racial attitude score.

The interpersonal distance scores for each of the eight stimuli were analyzed using a 2 x 2, sex of subject by race of subject analysis of variance for the difference score computed for each opposite race pair. The difference score was computed as the distance ascribed to the same race stimulus minus the distance ascribed to the opposite race stimulus. Distancing of the mother stimulus by race of subject was significant (F (91, 56) = 20.333; $p < .001$) with both black and white subjects distancing the black mother closer than the white mother. Black subjects distanced the black mother significantly closer than did the white subjects. There was no main effect of sex in the distancing of the mother figure.

Distancing of the father stimulus approached significance (F (1,56) = 2.929; $p > .08$) with a main effect of sex. Males showed greater distancing of the same race father while females showed no such distinction. Race of subject was not significant. Distancing of the brother also approached significance, (F (1,56) = 3.799; $p > .06$) with a main effect of race such that both black and white subjects distanced the white brother closer. Sex had no significant effect.

Distancing of the sister stimulus was significant at the $p < .05$ level (F (1,56) = 4.185) with a main effect of race. White subjects distanced the white sister closer and black subjects distanced the black sister closer. This was the only stimulus showing the traditional pattern of own race distanced closer than opposite race.

DISCUSSION

The failure to find any significant correlation between the PRAM and CID was disappointing as this study marked the first time the PRAM II had been given concurrently with another index of racial attitude. The failure to find any significant relationship between the two instruments brings to bear serious questions of constuct validity for both.

The insignificant relation between the two instruments may in part be due to the fact that the CID is not primarily an index of racial attitude; but rather, a measure of interpersonal distance with which many subject populations have demonstrated differential distancing patterns as a function of race. Preschool children in the present sample distanced the experimental stimuli neither as a function of race nor as a function of their racial attitude scores. It seems illogical that such clear cut bias patterns would be demonstrated with the PRAM instrument while no racial distancing patterns were seen with the CID performance scores.

Two hypotheses appear plausible. The first involves a closer look at the physical makeup of the CID and the young age of the population studied. The CID consists of 80 millimeter radii and eight two-inch experimental stimuli. This physical setting may be too abstract for five year olds to understand, thus accounting for the inconsistent distancing patterns. The 80 millimeter radius may not present enough physical space from which the child could adequately abstract interpersonal distance or distancing patterns.

An alternate hypothesis is that the CID and the PRAM II are tapping different aspects of the concept racial attitude. Perhaps the PRAM II, by the nature of its administration and test items, is picking up more racially stereotyped responses such as, "Black people are ugly, dirty, dumb, etc.", while "White people are nice, smart, pretty, etc."; and not assessing a personal

evaluation of self. This may explain why black children can give so many negative own-race associations and not seem to experience any cognitive dissonance. McAdoo (1976) has shown that the PRAM bias score is not related to the black child's self concept or self esteem scores. A child may have a pro-white/anti-black orientation as assessed by the PRAM, yet still display a highly intact self concept. The PRAM may be picking up dominant racial stereotypes prevalent in our society and reflected in the preschoolers responses; while the CID is picking up a more personal affect since the child is asked how close a black or white individual should come to a figure representing himself.

While it is conceivable that preschool children harbor no feelings of racial bias, and therefore show inconsistent interpersonal distancing patterns as a function of race, this is unlikely given the PRAM scores indicating bias and the long empirical history of racial attitude assessment to the contrary.

Certainly further research using the preschool version of the CID seems warranted. A larger version of the CID might be utilized with these preschool populations to see if more consistent patterns would be noted as the instrument approaches a more concrete, and therefore realistic setting.

Further assessments of the validity of the PRAM are imperative, as it is being increasingly used in the literature and the ramifications of these data are profound. The Clark Doll Test or a revision of the Horowitz Faces test could be used to assess concurrent validity. One might collect sociometric data--friendship preference, play patterns and correlate these with the PRAM bias scores. Since there are so few measures of racial attitude designed specifically for use with young children, a future validated index of racial attitude for use with preschool populations.

Since both the CID and PRAM are essentially paper and pencil tests, some form of real world observation technique might be employed for both measures to see if they have predictive validity with preschool populations. This type

of construct validation is sadly lacking for instruments used with preschool populations. For the CID, a procedure might be established where the child is asked to select his best briend in the class and ask this person to start walking toward him/her. The proximity could then be compared to that ascribed to a same vs. different race stranger. With preschoolers, some form of informal questioning after the standardized testing has been completed, is imperative to accurately evaluate one's findings. The reasoning behind ascribed is as important as the distance itself.

After the CID was given to one of the boys in the present sample, the child was shown a stimulus representing a same sex, opposite race person, and told to pretend thattthis was someone he hated. The child placed the stimulus figure one millimeter from the stimulus representing himself. When asked why the figure was placed so close to him if he didn't like the person, he replied, "So I can punch him in the mouth!". Truly, the child's mind and the adult interpretation of it are often very far apart.

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TABLE 1

CORRELATIONS OF PRAM BIAS SCORES WITH CID SCORES BY STIMULUS PAIR AND RACE

Race	Stimulus Pairs			
	Mother	Father	Sister	Brother
White n = 30	0.16	0.04	-0.15	-0.03
Black n = 30	-0.05	-0.08	0.39*	0.26
All subjects n = 60	0.14	0.09	0.21	0.10

* $p < .05$